

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



1400 So. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59715

September 18, 1995

TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. of Health & Environmental Sciences, Director's Office
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Director's Office
Parks Division
Fisheries Division
Wildlife Division
Regional Supervisor
Lands Section
Design and Construction
Legal Unit

Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202

Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800

Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 924, Helena, MT 59624

George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624

Gallatin County Commissioners, Gallatin County Courthouse, 311 W. Main, Room 301, Bozeman, MT 59715

Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Montana State Park Foundation, C/O Wayne Hirst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Attached is the decision notice for granting a categorical exclusion to the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association's groomed trail system.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Lewis

Stephen L. Lewis
Regional Supervisor

Gallatin
Snowmobile

Decision Notice For Granting a Categorical Exclusion to the
Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association's groomed trail system.

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Region 3
1400 S. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59715

September 1995

Description of Proposed Action:

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to grant a categorical exclusion to the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association's (GVSA) groomed trail system. The Snowmobile Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement review criteria for a categorical exclusion includes six conditions which must be satisfied. The GVSA's groomed trail system satisfies those conditions.

The department received twenty two letters from the public during the public comment period. Twenty one of the letters expressed support for the categorical exclusion. One letter from the Montana Wilderness Association expressed concerns on the review process.

The objective of the review process for a categorical exclusion was to determine whether the groomed trail system, which GVSA maintains, complied with Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). GVSA has met those criteria found under the Montana Snowmobile Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance and Forest review has been made based on the maintenance of these trails. According to the Gallatin National Forest, (GNF) the grooming of these trails during the winter months is a maintenance issue. The Bozeman District Ranger determined that there has been no significant change to the roads or trails and thereby determined that the grooming of the trails qualified for a categorical exclusion.

The Hyalite-Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area is not part of the groomed snowmobile trail system. No signing or grooming activity occurs in the Hyalite-Porcupine Buffalo Horn WSA. The regional staff administrating the snowmobile grant program, along with district forest personnel annually inspect the groomed trails to determine compliance by GVSA to the signed operating agreements with the GNF and FWP.

WLN 95-168791

Based on the analysis of documentation submitted by GVSA and the GNF, I find that the groomed trail system maintained by GVSA has complied with the review criteria under MEPA, and the Montana Snowmobile Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

FWP also received documentation from the Gallatin National Forest stating that maintenance of the groomed trail system has complied with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Gallatin National Forest regulations.

It is the decision of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to grant a categorical exclusion to the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association's groomed trail system, starting December 1, 1995.

The application for a categorical exclusion by the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association, and the Decision Notice may be viewed at or obtained from the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 3, Bozeman, Montana. Please direct requests and questions to:

Stephen L. Lewis

Stephen Lewis, Regional Supervisor
1400 S. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 994-4042